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Go Green: Fashionable bags that says "Recycled"

It's been a trend, recently, for all those who just love going green: It's a proclamation that being environment friendly should start with ones actions and[...]

Humanize your home

Arts/Life

By MELISSA DAVIS, SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY

Posted 3 days ago

The number one question asked of interior designer Melissa Davis: "How do we make our house more homey?"

Her clients want to know why their homes don't feel good or welcoming or interesting.

Her answer, nearly always, is "We need to infuse some history, some charm or a little calculated imperfection to humanize it all."

The DIY trend has taken off in recent years, and the spread of big-box stores have given homeowners lots of options. Yet they are often daunted by the task of renovating and worry about the time and money it will take to update their old and tired decor.

Davis, founder of www.designerfriend.ca, believes there are many ways to breathe new life into any home by either getting creative with existing items or searching second-hand stores for hidden gems that can be refinished into pieces that look modern, chic and polished.

Flea markets, antique centres and thrift stores are all great sources: "You can find nearly perfect pieces for a fraction of the price of brand new items." But one of her favourite places to pick up items, as well as inspiration, is Habitat for Humanity's ReStores, which accept donations of new and used building materials, then resell them to generate funds that support Habitat's building programs - talk about "humanizing" your home!

ReStores carry everything including the kitchen sink. With a constant turnover of inventory - windows, doors, hardware, tools, lighting fixtures - "Every trip offers an opportunity to discover a fantastic deal or a one-of-a-kind gem," says Neil Hetherington, CEO of Habitat for Humanity Toronto.

The organization famous for putting underprivileged families into new homes is now being recognized as a leader in the DIY movement and has stores in most large communities in Canada.

Adds Hetherington, "Thanks to the generosity of our ReStore donors, we are able to sell everything for at least 50%, or more, off retail."

So, the price is right. How do you find the right piece?

Davis says don't be afraid if you love some things about a second-hand item but still see room for improvement to make it the "perfect" piece. For example, if you love the shape but not the colour of an old chair, spray paint it. If you love a wooden coffee table but hate the stain, simply sand it and start from scratch for a truly individual piece.

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Something old can be new again -with a little patience and imagination.

To demonstrate just what she means, Davis will be appearing at the Habitat ReStore Recycled Dwelling at this year's Toronto Fall Home Show - it's a home created entirely with pieces that may have otherwise been destined for the landfill, all sourced from one of three Habitat ReStores in Toronto.

So before you turn away a seemingly shabby item in that trendy vintage shop, think about what it could become with a little elbow grease and creativity. That ragged second-hand piece might just be the most-talked-about item in your home this fall.

Before any renovation, Davis tells her clients, "Always know what you're going for, and have a clear picture of the room's style and your budget. The rest is having fun!"

Melissa Davis is a presenter at the Toronto Fall Home Show, Sept. 30-Oct. 3 at the Better Living Centre, Exhibition Place. For the complete schedule and tickets, visit www.fallhomeshow.com. To find your local Habitat ReStore, go to <http://habitat.ca/findarestorep1380.php>.

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